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Five critiques of the Open Educational Resources movement.

This paper will review existing literature on Open Educational Resources. It is intended to examine and critique the theories which underpin the promotion of OER in higher education, not provide guidance on their implementation. 1.) I will introduce the concepts of positive and negative liberty to suggest an under-theorisation of the term 'open'. 2.) OER literature will be shown to endorse a two-tiered system, in which the institution is both maintained and disaggregated. 3.) I will highlight a diminishing of the role of pedagogy within the OER vision, and the promotion of a learner-centred model for education. 4.) This stance will be aligned with humanistic assumptions of unproblematic self-direction and autonomy. 5.) I will discuss the extent to which the OER movement aligns itself with economically-orientated models of the university. I offer these critiques as a framework for the OER movement to develop as a theoretically rigorous area of scholarship.

Keywords: OER; open education; self-direction; autonomy; Foucault

Introduction

The Internet has become central to the aims of the open education movement. It is a technology perceived to reduce or diminish institutional dominance, and facilitate democratic access to information (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011; Taylor 2011). Internet technology is frequently judged to have 'enabled and inspired' the open education movement itself (Brown and Adler, 2008, p18), and it is Open Educational Resources (OER) which have had the biggest impact in this area. The OER movement proposes extensive free access to information in the form of web-based digital resources for teaching, learning, and research, and is associated with a wide range of projects including MIT's 'OpenCourseWare', and the 'OER University' (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011). OER are typically placed in the public domain for free use or repurposing by others, and can range from full courses to individual modules (Downes 2007; Hylen 2002). Following from significant institutional uptake of OER projects

worldwide (Caswell et al. 2008; Hilton III et al. 2010; Hylén 2002), in 2011 UNESCO announced policy guidelines for the implementation of OER in higher education, attempting formally to standardise the ways in which these resources are created and shared within the sector (UNESCO 2011).

Academic interest in OER has largely focussed on case studies, strategies for implementation, and approaches to institutional change (see Anderson 2009, Conole 2012, Duval and Wiley 2010, Ehiyazaryan and Fitzgerald 2012, Gaskell 2009, Tait et al., 2011). However, critical studies which examine the pedagogical and educational rationales that underpin OER are less common, and the field remains significantly under-theorised. Therefore, in this paper I will introduce five critiques of OER, with the intention of providing a framework for the movement to develop as a theoretically rigorous area of scholarship. It is not my intention to propose ways in which OER might be implemented, developed or promoted, because such a strategy presupposes their value. The purpose of this paper is to question the underlying philosophical implications of employing OER in higher education. At a time when prominent figures in the open education movement are claiming OER to be ‘the key not only to solving the global education crisis but to unlocking sustainable global growth in the 21st century’ (Daniel and Killion 2012), such a theoretical consideration is vital.

The critiques outlined in this paper are motivated by a concern for the ways in which learners are being framed by the promotion of OER. In focussing, often disproportionately, on the capacity for OER to solve the longstanding educational problems of access and inclusion, this promotion appears grounded in the well-established path of liberal education; as a project that seeks to improve the human condition (Marshall 1996). At the heart of the OER mission is ‘the provision of access

to learning opportunities to those who would not otherwise be able to obtain them' (Downes 2011). Using OER is claimed to enhance the quality of human life, bring people out of poverty, and in doing so taking on the role of 'social transformer' (Caswell et al. 2008, p1). For this purpose, the OER community pledges 'to develop together a universal educational resource available for the whole of humanity' (D'Antoni 2008, p7). With reference to the declaration of human rights, Caswell et al. claim 'for the first time, we can now begin to convert a 60- year-old declaration into a reality' (2008, p10). However, in taking on such grand tasks, the advancement of OER frequently makes assumptions about the kind of individuals who might participate in their educational model. In defining the object of education to be the enhancement of human life, the OER movement tends to naturalise an archetypal human condition; a set of idealised qualities to which learners are expected to adhere. These characteristics are predicated on the ways that openness, freedom and independence are advanced as part of the OER agenda.

An under-theorisation of the notions of 'openness' and 'freedom'.

In 1958 the liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin proposed two concepts of freedom: positive liberty and negative liberty (Berlin 1969). Established in the fields of political philosophy and economics, these ideas about the nature of individual freedom provide valuable insights for a consideration of open education. Positive liberty concerns itself with specifying the practice of freedom. At the heart of this concept is the idea that individuals are rational beings; it is through the innate abilities of reason that people are able to decide the form and quality of freedom, and the way in which liberty is to be exercised (Berlin 1969). For Berlin, this idea of positive liberty operates within the individual, banishing lower order desires, as much as it functions in society, where

populations can be coerced into the notions of freedom rationalised by those in authority. In contrast, Berlin also defines negative liberty. Rather than involving itself with the practice of being free, this idea of liberty emphasises the removal of barriers to freedom. Where positive liberty might be considered freedom *to*, negative liberty becomes freedom *from* (Marshall 1996). At the core of this individualistic sense of freedom is the idea that people must be allowed to exercise their will without the intervention or oppression of other human beings (Berlin 1969). Thus negative liberalism concerns itself entirely with the removal of obstructions to personal liberty, and offers no vision for how freedom might actually operate in practice. The central difference between these two concepts of freedom is the extent to which liberty must be specified, or can be assumed. Positive liberty views the predefinition of freedom as a requirement for a coherent society, while negative liberty assumes that it will come to exist when obstacles are eliminated.

These two concepts of liberty can be traced in the principles of individual freedom and independence that underpin both conventional education and open access learning. The traditional model of the educational institution might be considered to reflect the rationales of positive liberty by predetermining the methods of access to knowledge, and the subsequent delivery of learning. Just as in Berlin's formulation of positive liberty (1969), the control and discipline exacted by the educational institution can be viewed as the imposition of a centralised rationality. This view is informed by a Foucauldian sense of power as existing in the performance of systems; having 'embodiment in rational forms of government, administration, management and supervision' (Usher and Edwards 2005, p402). The institution predefines the structure and organisation of education, as well as the status and extent of knowledge, according to what it considers to be the most reasonable approach to improving the lives of the

unenlightened (Marshall 1996). In this traditional teacher-centred model, learners are coerced into the systems of the institution on the grounds that they are as yet unaware of the rational superiority of the educational method. This view resonates with aspects of positive liberty, in which the populace are considered blind to the rationality inherent in themselves (Berlin 1969). Where education has been considered a public service which emancipates the illiterate and innumerate from the predicaments of ignorance (Ball 1990; Marshall 1990, 1996), the educational institution might be considered to play a definitive role in the agenda of positive liberalism.

It is perhaps this type of exaggerated scenario that liberal educators have perceived in the traditional university, and this kind of model which provokes the desire to move away from institutional control. Educational endeavours that promote open access have clear similarities with the concept of negative liberty, focussing their concerns on emancipation from hierarchies of control and the bypassing of systems which condition admittance to knowledge. The OER movement in particular appears to emphasise the model of freedom *from*, positing 'the removal of "unfreedoms"' (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007, p1) as a principal aim, alongside 'innovative approaches to remove barriers to the creation; use, re-use and sharing of high-quality content' (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007, p5). In declaring that 'individuals are free to learn from OER' (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011, p4), the implication appears to be that learning is something that is possible with, perhaps even enhanced by, the absence of organisation and structure. Central to many in the OER cause is the idea that the educational institution functions as a barrier to the egalitarian acquisition of knowledge. This is often formulated in the claim that demand for higher education surpasses current provision; a dilemma which OER are suggested to solve (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007; Brown and Adler 2008; Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011; Taylor 2011).

This drive to overcome obstacles has dominated the literature, in which OER are also suggested to provide solutions to copyright regulations or financial constraints (for example Downes 2007; Hylen 2002).

Berlin's two concepts of liberty provide a coherent framework for understanding the implications of the OER project. By promoting 'openness' in terms akin to negative liberty, the OER movement has overemphasised the removal of barriers as the principal concern of open education. However, as a result of this focus, there is a distinct lack of consideration for how learning might take place once these obstacles are overcome.

The rejection and privileging of institutional structure.

The promotion of OER appears to advocate two different educational models. I will suggest here that these cannot coexist without the creation of a two-tiered education system. University affiliation is often made explicit, most notably on MIT's OpenCourseWare website (MIT 2012). Within this model, OER are promoted as ways of sharing teaching resources amongst existing faculty, as well as facilitating the establishment of participative learning communities comprised of students and academics (Brown and Adler 2008), a view supported by Downes (2007). Rather than mere information repositories, OER are described as the building blocks of a constructivist-informed 'learning 2.0', comprised of social learning, legitimate peripheral participation and learning through communities of practice (Brown and Adler 2008, p28). Brown and Adler suggest that OER learners will become enthused by niche groups, 'learning to be' through processes of enculturation and apprenticeship (2008, p19). Ultimately, this model of learning involves teachers and university faculty playing a central role in using, creating and adapting OER (Johnstone 2005).

Institutional structures remain intact, and OER are promoted as a way of enhancing the activities of teaching, learning and research in the university.

However, OER are also promoted as part of a very different model. In order to avoid the perceived limitations of the institution, organisations such as the influential OER University (OERu) are advancing the idea of an ‘OER ecosystem’ (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011, p5). Within this model, campus attendance is unnecessary and the use of OER encompasses the entire educational experience. The OERu call for a ‘parallel universe’ (Taylor 2007), in which the activities of teaching and learning take place independently of a centralised institution. Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor propose that in this ‘examination only’ model (2011, p1), ‘learners access courses based solely on OER’, (2011, p5) while institutional involvement is reduced to assessment and accreditation. Significantly, these plans are not advanced as an alternative to existing institutional practices. Alongside the benefits of sharing of resources and expertise amongst teachers - implying the preservation of current university faculty - OER are suggested ‘to complement and augment formal education provision, especially for those who lack the means to follow traditional learning paths’ (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011, p5). This OER model is therefore not in opposition to the institution as a place for teaching and learning. Rather, it seeks to widen participation in education with a two-tiered system: those who are guided in their learning by institutional expertise, and those who must self-direct. Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor acknowledge the potential for inequality in this model, however the problem is framed solely in terms of accreditation, suggesting that OER ‘could lead to a new form of elitism where the perception associated with online degrees using OER would not command the same respect as campus-based alternatives’ (2011 p3). What they fail to recognise however, is that by calling for independent OER learning to be assessed in the

same way as campus-based education, those targeted by the OERu are expected to achieve the same levels of attainment without the contact or supervision received by those attending university. The inequality does not just lie in the recognition of the qualification, but also in the range and quality of the guidance and support.

No place for pedagogy

In proposing that institutional involvement can be reduced to the roles of assessment and accreditation, prominent voices within the OER movement appear to reject the pedagogical functions of the university and the place of the teacher. Wiley describes higher education's existing 'core areas' as 'content, research, expertise, and credentialing' (Wiley 2006, p4), which appears to downplay the part that teaching plays in the institution. The inclusion of pedagogical strategy or teaching theory in this model of OER learning seems to be thin on the ground. Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor suggest that OER learners are supported by 'appropriate pedagogical design for digital learning environments; and a new global system for academic volunteers' (2011, p1). However, this appears to diminish the responsibilities of the teacher to environmental facilitation, and deny the role of teaching a professional status. The term 'open pedagogy' has been identified as a central and critical area for development (Taylor 2011), however its definition has been limited thus far to 'teaching focused on the pedagogy of discovery' (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011, p14). This apparent dismissal of teaching methods and teacherly expertise might be considered to sit uneasily with the prestige attached to institutional accreditation. In proposing that university approval for qualifications will raise the perception of OER, Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor appear to acknowledge the status and value of the institution (2011). Yet, in advancing a

model of self-directed OER learning, the pedagogical proficiency that undoubtedly contributes to the prestige of the institution is eliminated.

I suggest that the absence of teaching strategies is predicated on a fundamental prioritisation of 'learning' as the central concern of the OER movement. This reflects a broad conceptual shift which has been termed the 'learnification' of education (Biesta 2009). This involves 'the translation of everything there is to say about education in terms of learning and learners' (Biesta 2009, p3). Such a shift might be considered to follow from the influence of humanistic psychology and a constructivist orthodoxy in education, where 'learner-centred' methods are privileged. However, while self-directed learning appears to underpin the OER project, it is seldom theorised in the literature. The nurturing of self-motivation is implied in suggestions for 'passion-based learning' (Brown and Adler 2008, p32), yet this remains undefined. Reference is made to the ways in which OER might be repurposed and reused, however this tends to foreground strategies for dissemination rather than theories for learning (Hilton III et al. 2010). Downes calls for a 'self-managed education', but concentrates on proposing infrastructures and strategies for how this might be put in place, rather than specifying how it might actually operate in practice (2011). This absence is justified in terms distinctly reminiscent of Berlin's negative liberty: 'The temptation to manage, and especially to manage for outcomes, in the provision of any good or service, is overwhelming. It should and must be avoided' (Downes 2011).

There is a significant lack of research concerning the ways that teaching in higher education might translate into the model of independent, self-directed access to learning resources. The use of OER in the absence of institutional structures, with their in-built teaching frameworks and pedagogical and subject expertise, implies that

individuals are able to manage their own educational activity without difficulty. In endorsing such self-directed learning, the OER movement has tended to make assumptions about the capacity for individuals to act purely in an autonomous fashion.

Humanistic assumptions of autonomy and self-direction

Berlin's two concepts of liberty provide one way in which we can understand the implications of self-directed OER learning. One of the central arguments in Berlin's paper was for plurality in the concept of liberty, highlighting two uses of the term which differ significantly in their outlook, and imply very different ideas about how society might operate (1969). However, to privilege negative liberty in its most idealistic sense is to assume that states can exist in the absence of restriction, dominance and discipline, and ultimately to adopt a narrow view of the concept of power. As tantalising as the promise of openness might seem in the context of education - a world emancipated from the constraints of archaic institutions, in which individuals are free to do and learn as they please - such unregulated autonomy cannot in principle be predicted or assumed to function according to predefined ideas. Indeed, Berlin suggests that philosophers have dismissed an extreme form of negative liberty, supposing that 'it would entail a state in which all men could boundlessly interfere with all other men; and this kind of "natural" freedom would lead to social chaos' (Berlin 1969, p157).

However, advocates of self-directed OER learning frequently predict outcomes comparable to those achieved with institutional guidance (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011). Moreover, the prognostications of emancipation, global economic gains, and universal education (see Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007; Daniel and Killion 2012; Caswell et al. 2008), appear to sit uneasily with the idea of a decentralised system that avoids predefined aims. Given that those promoting the independent use of OER

are not advocates of chaotic or unpredictable learning, we might contend that reasoned thinking must play some part the structuring of the OER project. Therefore, it is not the concept of negative liberty itself that is problematic, but rather the premise that its realisation will achieve predefined goals; that an expected order will somehow emerge from unrestrained action. In predicting achievements that often surpass those of the university, we might suppose that proponents of self-directed OER learning assume an innate human ability to self-direct. Education itself has been implicated in such humanistic suppositions, being founded on the ideals of the rational exercise of autonomy and individual agency (Usher and Edwards 1994).

It is therefore the conception of the human being that is of profound importance in a critical study of OER. As Berlin astutely points out, 'the conception of freedom directly derives from the view that is taken of what constitutes a self, a person, a man. Enough manipulation with the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes' (Berlin 1969, p163). It is here that we can perceive the limitations of Berlin's two concepts of liberty, and begin to tackle the potential problems in pursuing open education as the mere removal of perceived barriers to access. The dichotomous view of freedom envisioned in the positive and negative concepts of liberty rely on the assumption of a given, self-directing human subject, imbued with innate abilities to engage in rational and autonomous behaviour. Such a humanistic perspective assumes that learners are 'naturalistic objects, pre-existing in the social world' (Usher and Edwards 2005, p404). However, such a stable, predetermined subjectivity can only relate to notions of power in terms of overt dominance. In the case of positive liberty power is thus limited to exercising authority or acceding to it. In the case of negative liberty, power becomes something that one can only escape from. Such a perspective denies more subtle notions of power, in which human subjectivity

can be constructed and shaped by forms of control, rather than simply responding as a predefined and stable entity. Thus, the promotion of independent OER learning will be considered here to follow the course of governance in modern society, where forms of power 'intertwine expertise and personal empowerment, thereby displacing the need for active containment and overt oppression' (Usher and Edwards 2005, p401). It is precisely in this fashion - through the overt endorsement of institutional accreditation and the ambitious pledges of empowerment and autonomy - that the OER movement might conceal more profound instances of power.

One possible way for the OER movement to engage with the more suitable instances of power, may be to engage with a critical theory of the subject. Rather than perceiving individual autonomy as an innate human quality, such a perspective might view independence and self-direction in education is a social construction (Marshall 1996; Olssen 2005). This critique of autonomy derives from the contention that the self is able to objectively comprehend and abide by laws, as opposed to merely following them (Marshall 1996; Olssen 2005). This follows from Foucault's assertion that the notion of the subject cannot entail a separation of the transcendental from the empirical (Marshall 1996). To act autonomously requires the subject to be able to discern all that might influence or affect them, necessitating that the individual be viewed as an entity separate to, and abstracted from those encroachments. Referring to Kant, Marshall suggests that such a notion of autonomy was conceived out of the need to vindicate moral action, rather than provide a coherent sense of subjective agency (1996).

Foucault's notion of subjectivity challenges the idea that the self and the law can be considered separate entities, proposing that the self only comes into being through the enactment of laws (Marshall 1996). Thus, the human subject emerges from structure and organisation, rather than being foundational. Related to this notion of subjectivity,

a broad spectrum of Foucault's work has concerned the construction of the self through power-knowledge (Olssen 2005), a concept that stipulates the close relationship between power and knowledge such that one is always embroiled in the other (Foucault 1979). From this perspective, the emergence of knowledge necessitates systems and configurations of power.

Such perspectives call into question the apparent reliance on self-direction and autonomy often detectable in OER literature. Alternatively, the OER movement might contend with the notion that its planning, implementation, presentation, and discourse, are involved the construction of the subjects who participate with them. If an environment is structured in such a way as to presuppose a certain type of subject, that subject will emerge (Marshall 1996 citing Walkerdine 1986). That said, in suggesting that the OER movement engage with a Foucauldian critique of the subject, it is not my intention to replace the idea of innate qualities with one that sees human beings constructed entirely through discourse. Rather, this perspective is intended to highlight the complex range of external factors which might influence or interact with the practices of self-directed learning. Indeed, aspects of individual agency are not impossible with OER, and the ability to reconstruct and recontextualise these resources has been stated as a foundational principle (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007, Johnstone 2005). Nevertheless, this extent of this 'remixability' has been criticised for its failure to adapt to local contexts, specifically for non-Western peoples (Richter and McPherson 2012). As we shall see in the next section, it is precisely this group of people who are assumed to benefit from high-profile OER initiatives.

Alignment with the needs of capital

Foucault's concept of governmentality offers a useful theoretical framework through which the construction of OER subjectivity might be considered. Governmentality concerns the interplay between what Foucault terms 'technologies of domination' and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988). The former relates to the ways that individuals are constructed through discourse, while the latter concerns the induced behaviours through which an individual might perform a particular kind of subjectivity. This allows us to consider how the subject of open education might be constructed by the interplay between promotion and participation; how the OER learner might emerge from the discourse and methods of self-directed learning. In this final section, I will offer some examples of the ways in which OER are publicised in the media and described in academic research, and connect these themes with a theoretical view of self-directed conduct. While I do not content that this theoretical offering encompasses the entire OER experience, I do suggest that it highlights vital issues concerning the functions and responsibilities of higher education.

In suggesting that OER could be the solution to economic growth in developing countries, Daniel and Killion appear unambiguous about who is being targeted by the self-directed model of OER learning (2012). As we have seen, this second-class OER provision is aimed at learners who lack the means to attend established institutions. As such, the notion of empowerment features strongly, promising emancipation from the obstacles of 'poverty, limited economic opportunity, inadequate education and access to knowledge, deficient health care, and oppression' (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007, p1). However, and often paradoxically, much of the language in OER literature is distinctly in terms of the marketisation and commodification of higher education and its subjects (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011). OER become an element of the arsenal brought to bear by the institution in contending with global

competition, and the learner participates as a consumer, ‘characterised by a *demand-pull* rather than the traditional *supply-push* mode’ (Brown and Adler 2008, p30). Successful places of learning are described as 'robust local ecosystems of resources supporting innovation and productiveness' (Brown and Adler 2008, p16), utilising terminology which naturalises the conditions of economic prosperity and the exchange of capital. The effectiveness of OER is frequently articulated in terms of the ability to 'reduce the costs associated with reproducing and maintaining online courses' (Macintosh, McGreal and Taylor 2011, p8), however this emphasis on replication appears to suggest the need for uniformity, where a homogeneous population of learners benefit from identical resources. OER proposes to produce a 'well-educated workforce with the requisite competitive skills' (Brown and Adler 2008, p16), while Downes cites the 'link between educational attainment and economic activity' (2011), appearing to align the learning subject seamlessly with a functioning capitalist economy. Daniel and Killion are upfront about this alliance, suggesting that the best OER initiatives should align their content directly with the needs of specific businesses (2012). As we have seen, one of the central justifications for OER is the claim that demand exceeds current and future institutional provision. However, this appears to rely on the promise of great swathes of self-motivated educational consumers, ready to shell out their innate ability to learn in exchange for gainful employment.

The manner of participation in self-directed learning can also be perceived to directly influence how individuals formulate knowledge about themselves. The ‘parallel universe’ of OER appears to permit a very specific form of independent educational conduct. Within this model, individuals are obliged to attain, for themselves, particular states of scholarship, enlightenment and economic well-being. This human capital, from a Foucauldian perspective, is deeply embroiled in defining the

individual as an autonomous being, who is responsible for their own development (Lemke 2001). As we have seen in the restructuring of the educational institution, the responsibility for learning is shifted entirely to the individual. Decision-making is placed solely in the hands of the individual, where consequences 'are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them' (Lemke 2001, p201). However, institutional control does not diminish, rather the OER movement can be conceived as 'a reorganization or restructuring of government techniques, shifting the regulatory competence of the state onto "responsible" and "rational" individuals' (Lemke 2001, p202). The freedoms induced through the use of OER have also been claimed to 'increase human capital' (Atkins, Brown and Hammond 2007, p2), barely disguising adherence to the idea that autonomy 'retains its connections with policies and institutions of the state' (Marshall 1996, p85). It is the citizens of the world who must liberate themselves from poverty and ignorance through the activities of self-directed and autonomous learning. Thus the self-directed OER model permits particular behaviours and activities that influence and compound the sense of autonomy and empowerment in the production of the self as human capital.

Furthermore, such a personally responsible subject is implicated in the practice of persistent self-examination. Such 'self-inspection' can be considered a systematic thought process; acting to identify knowledge, as well as authenticate it. In combination, this forms a permanent self-critique in which the individual measures their 'self' against established regimes of knowledge (Foucault 1988). Significantly, the OER subject is often projected to be an individual in need of continual learning, upheld on the basis that relevant knowledge becomes ever increasingly redundant in contemporary society (Brown and Adler 2008). This reflects notions of the contemporary self as constructed through the role of the consumer; a subject in permanent deficit (Rose

1989). Thus the independent OER learner is encouraged to subject themselves to a prolonged scholarship, persistently engaging in examinations of the self in order to determine the superfluity of their knowledge and become a flexible contributor to the efficient flow of capital.

Conclusion

This paper is not intended to dismiss the OER movement per se, but rather to seek its refinement through a more rigorous theoretical examination. The five critiques introduced above are suggested to provide a coherent framework for future work in this area.

1. Further research is required concerning the pedagogical implications of openly accessible information. Proponents of OER have focussed disproportionately on the removal of barriers to accessing educational content, and studies into the activities and competences of self-direction are needed.

2. Two differing models of OER learning are being promoted: one which maintains the restricted provision of the university; and another which proposes independent study, preserving the institution only for assessment and accreditation. Higher education needs to consider the implications of this disaggregation, and the potential problems incurred by a two-tier education system.

3. The promotion of self-directed OER learning neglects to address the role of pedagogy. OER initiatives which seek the prestige of formal institutional accreditation need to acknowledge that teaching is integral to the reputation of the university.

4. The OER movement tends to make presumptions about the ability of its learners to self-direct towards the predefined goals of established institutional

assessment. OER research might contend with initiatives that actively involve learners in new forms of assessment and recognition. Badge systems serve as an indicator of particular accomplishments or skills within various learning environments. Instead of viewing university accreditation as the ultimate goal of OER learning, badges offer ‘a way to capture, promote and transfer all of the learning that can occur within a broader connected learning ecology’ (Peer 2 Peer University and The Mozilla Foundation 2012).

5. The use of OER can be perceived, not as a more rational improvement to education, or a more humane and naturalised form of learning, but as a further refinement in the exercise of power. The OER movement needs to acknowledge its own discursive alignment with the marketisation and commodification of education, and the ways in which this technology constructs the learning subject as human capital.

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